DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 447 AL 001 875

By-Pfeiffer, Anita
The Role of TESOL in Bilingual Education for the Navajo Child.
Pub Date 8 Mar 69
Note-9p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.55
Descriptors-*American Indian Culture, *Biculturalism, *Bilingual Education, *Bilingualism, Cultural Background, Culture Conflict, *English (Second Language), Navaho, Parent School Relationship, Teacher Education
Identifiers-Arizona Bilingual Council, *Rough Rock Demonstration School

In American-Indian and Spanish-American populations, many schools ignore the first language and culture of their students and teach English as a second language in a "hit and miss" manner. Bringing some order out of this chaos has been one of TESOL's most significant contributions. The author feels, however, that there is no substance to teaching English to speakers of other languages in and of itself; it has value only as a means of helping the child communicate in a different medium. In 1967, a case study was made which focused on a Kwakiutl Indian considered particularly well-adapted and bicultural. The summary of the study showed that an individual could make one of five choices in dealing with another culture. He could (1) completely reject the new culture; (2) completely reject his own culture; (3) reject both cultures and start a new one--e.g., the Peyote religious sect; (4) remain suspended between the two cultural systems, escaping through excessive drinking, with a high degree of anxiety; or (5) participate in two or more cultural systems, moving back and forth between them. The author describes herself as a person having made the fifth choice. She discusses the bilingual, bicultural program for Navajo children at Rough Rock Demonstration School in Chinle, Arizona. (AMM)

OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

March 8, 1969

The Role of TESOL in Bilingual Education for the Navajo Child

by Anita Pfeiffer
Rough Rock Demonstration School
Chinle, Arizona 86503

I would like to begin my talk by telling you a story of a man, a Navajo man who lived on the Navajo reservation. This man grew up in a traditional Navajo home. His father was a medicine man and his mother was a Navajo diagnostician, a hand trembler. As a boy this man herded sheep for the family, lived in a hogan, gathered herbs for his father, slept on a sheep skin, hauled wood from a mountain some 40 miles away in a horse drawn wagon, hauled water from a distance of 10 miles away every other day, spoke only Navajo and participated in many ceremonies which his father conducted. When he was 12 years of age some government officials came to his family and enrolled him in school. The school he attended was located 200 miles away the first year. The following year he was taken to another school which was located even farther away from his home. He didn't see his parents during the years he was at school. He was told not to speak Navajo and to forget his culture. He couldn't stand the isolation from his family so he ran away many times from school, but always the government workers would take him back to school. At the end of his 7th year of school he ran away again and this time the Bureau of Indian Affairs workers did not try to get him back to school because he became blind during his trip home on foot.

As the years passed he regained his sight, got married and started a family. He wanted to take care of his family properly so he listened when a minister got him interested in going to school to become an interpreter. He took his family to a city and lived there for four years while he learned about Christianity. Again he was told to ignore his culture. He should not attend sacred ceremonies because they were "evil." He worked with the church for a number of years until he could no longer stand the removal from his people. He resigned from his position with the church and began participating in his own cultural functions. He still did not feel right with himself. Since childhood he had been

AL 001 875

taught his culture was not good by school people and then again by church people. And yet he knew his father and mother lived happily and harmoniously with themselves and their neighbors. He didn't know which was the right way, but he encouraged his own children to learn well the language and culture of both Navajo and the dominant society. He also encouraged his children to stay in school and to learn as much as possible. He kept his children near home as much as possible. Although he encouraged his children to learn about both cultures well, he was very much caught between two cultures and eventually turned to the bottle and drank more and more frequently to ease his confusion.

Some of you are wondering why I'm telling you this story. I'll come back to it in a short while. I can recall in 1960, during the formation of the Arizona Bilingual Council, talking about peculiar language needs of both the Indian and Spanish-American populations: namely that they did not have the command of their mother language. English as a second language was not working from its stated premise: that the first language was known. Most schools ignore the first language and ignore the culture from which the children come and therefore the first language is never enhanced. English as a second language is taught but in a hit and miss manner. Bringing some order out of this chaos has been one of TESOL's most significant contributions. While we have order out of chaos we need to keep TESOL in perspective. While Indian children admittedly need systematic courses of study in their acquisition of English, it should always be borne in mind that there is no substance to TESOL in and of itself, it has value only as a means of helping the child communicate in a different medium. As the role of TESOL burgeons in Indian education, there is always the danger of losing sight of the child in the glory of "the new discipline."

When we talk about language we also talk about culture because you cannot separate one from the other. In 1967 a case study was made focusing on a Kwakiutl Indian who was considered particularly well adapted and bicultural. The summary of this study showed an individual could make one of five choices in dealing with another culture. (1) He could

completely reject the new culture, as is the case with a number of our Navajo people who live on the reservation. Most of the traditional Navajos have never been to school because their parents made a decision for them when they were young, that they would not go to school. Now many of these people lament the arbitrary act on the part of their parents and wish that they had gone to school. (2) He could reject his own culture, as is the case with many of our Navajo people who live in cities and cannot write to their families and relatives on the reservation because they have nothing in common. I know of a Navajo teacher who lives in a city and says the only way Navajos can succeed in this world is to join the crowd, that is, to become like middle class Anglos. There is no respect for her from her family because she has rejected them. (3) He could reject both cultures and start a new culture, such as that offered by the Peyote religious sect of American Indians. For these people the traditional Navajo religion is too traditional and Christianity is too foreign so they have blended and made addition to two systems and formed the Peyote religion,which is a blend of both. Many younger Navajos have embraced this religion both on and off the reservation. (4) He could remain suspended between the two cultural systems. We have a large number of Navajos who fit in this category. The individual cannot cope with his own culture, neither can he cope with the sominant culture. We find examples of these individuals in reservation border towns such as Gallup, New Mexico. They respond to culture conflict by escaping through excessive drinking and are characterized by a high degree of anxiety. Many of these people are sincerely looking for answers to their problems, but are so confused they cannot begin to sort the areas of conflict. The story that I told at the beginning of this talk is a story of such a person. His neighbors cannot help him because they are, in most cases, in worse shape than he. The fifth response is represented by those who creatively and successfully adjust to the bicultural environment. They learn to participate in two or more cultural systems (moving back and forth between them). We desperately need these people who have not only learned about another culture, but have learned how to live with peoples from many different cultures. I'll use myself as an example in describing how difficult it is for a Navajo youngster to try to be bilingual and bicultural in a traditional school and home situation

on the reservation. By the time I reached high school many of my relatives were encouraging me to stop school and look for a job so that I could contribute to the family economy, but fortunately my parents encouraged me to stay in school and to finish college. As I continued through college my relatives expected me to forget about them and the Navajo ways, but I wanted to be a part of both cultures and deliberately learned as much as I could about my own culture, and about the Anglo culture, which was not very hard since the schools were all one-sided. I feel very fortunate in being able to feel comfortable in both Navajo and Anglo ways and am able to feel comfortable in other world cultures. The community at Rough Rock wants very much to provide our Navajo youngsters with all the opportunities to make this choice. The Rough Rock Demonstration School is one of two schools on the Navajo reservation which is a bilingual-bicultural school. One of the reasons why we are able to provide this type of program is the fact that we have been able to secure extra funds to initiate such a program. Rough Rock is also recognizing the fact that Navajos need to learn a second language which will help them function in the dominant culture. Rough Rock is referred to by the Navajos as Diné Bi' olta', the Navajo School. The parents in this community asked us to include Navajo Language and Navajo Culture in our curriculum when the doors of the school opened three years ago. They asked that we teach English in the most efficient way possible and to this end Dr. Robert D. Wilson, a linguist in the Department of English at the University of California at Los Angeles, helped us develop our language program. He states that there are two kinds of bilinguals. A Compound Bilingual is a person who knows English not as a completely self-contained system of rules but, rather, mostly as a set of rules translating Navajo into English. The resultant expression is pidgin English or pidgin Navajo. The other is a Coordinate Bilingual -- A person who uses the system of rules of English or the system of rules of Navajo, according to the demands of the situation. The two systems operate independently. And the result is a native speaker of English. The form of coordinate bilingualism is that there are two systems of rules in the mind, but the speaker knows the system of each language so well he can switch back and forth as the situation requires. At Rough Rock we are going beyond the language element in a child's school career and including and teaching his culture. Language development in his first language can only be developed through his culture.

Since setting up a bilingual program we had to recruit bilingual teachers; this meant hiring Navajo teachers who have mastered the English language. Non-Navajos who have learned the Navajo language can be counted on two hands, which is quite telling, seeing that our language has been in this country for a long time. This is indicative of the interest the teachers and educators show in learning about and participating in the world of the children they teach. The only knowledge many teachers on the reservation have of Navajos is an occasional hitch-hiker picked up along the read or the not infrequent sight of a Navajo staggering on the streets of Gallup, New Mexico.

Rough Rock has organized what we call a live-in program for staff members employed at Rough Rock. The staff members can stay in a hogan with a family for two or three days, depending on how long the parents have agreed to host the teachers. I have a story which one of our Anglo teachers wrote for his class about his live-in experience. The two teachers who went out together are both named Guy, so the children titled the story Guy and Guy: The Sheepherders. (The story is attached to this speech)

This story gives you an idea of some of the things our teachers have done through participating in our live-in program.

Rough Rock is a Navajo School. On any given day you'll see many parents visiting the school. You'll find parents in the dormitories, in the cafeteria, in the classrooms, in the offices and participating in their adult education program. We have a parent Advisory Committee consisting of 12 members who make suggestions and discuss school activities. Our School Board consists of 7 members who meet not once a month, but once a week to discuss school affairs. Only two of the seven members have any formal schooling. One has had an education comparable to the third grade and the other about the 6th grade. Even though these men have little or no formal education they are very wise and have made all the policies pertaining to our school. They both hire and fire people who don't do their jobs to the satisfaction of the community. These people are involved in the education of their children and are doing a magnificent job. Parents for the first time are learning about school and what their children are learning.

One of my aides, Rita Benally, told me that when she went to school her parents weren't allowed in the classroom and when her parents did come to visit her, they were clocked and told their visiting time was up after a few minutes of visitation. She said Rough Rock is a wonderful place for children. One of the mothers, Elizabeth Clah, who is a member of the Advisory Committee, said she likes the school very much because it's always open, even in the evenings. She's glad that the school is teaching the children to learn to participate and function in their culture and the dominant culture.

In summary I would like to say that when we speak of teaching English as a second language, let's be honest and recognize and develop the child's first language and teach English as a second language. The student should not have to make an either-or choice, but to use both languages as useful tools.

GUY AND GUY THE SHEEPHERDERS

by

Guy Blackburn
Rough Rock Demonstration School

I got to the hogan about noon. Nobody was around so I knocked at the door and a quiet voice said "Wóshdée'," so I went in. There by a small iron stove sat John Dick's wife drying two newborn lambs. She put warm sand from around the stove on them and soon they quit shivering. I helped with one but wasn't sure I was doing it the right way so I just watched her closely and rubbed it with a burlap sack. Then both lambs pushed their noses under my coat looking for milk. There was a quiet knock on the door and my friend, Guy Ottewell, came in. His coat was wet and he explained that he had carried the lambs in. The lambs cried for their mother so we took them out and they ate for the first time.

We decided to go herd sheep and off we walked for about a half mile. The lady who was herding was glad to see us and pointed to the hogan and said, "Shi," We said, "Hágoshii," and she left. Then we looked at each other and I thought, Now what do we do? Guy Ottewell, who had a little more practice, said, "I'll go over to the right and you stay here, then we'll move them toward that little canyon."

"Hágoshii," I said in my very best Navajo, which wasn't very good. Well, everything was going fine for about 30 seconds; then suddenly the sheep started to get in a line and go for the hogan. I thought they would stop but they didn't so I ran after them and headed them off. Finally I chased them back and went to ask Guy what was wrong with them. He said he didn't know and just then some of them took off again and I took off after them. I ran and ran but, this time they were too fast and made it back to the hogan. I really felt silly, just think a school teacher being tricked by a bunch of sheep. I thought they were supposed to be dumb but they were smarter than I. I decided to sit on a little hill and think things over. Guy Ottewell still had most of the sheep. At least I thought he did but about that time here they came.

AL 001 875

I jumped off the hill and tried to head them off. As I stood there waving and shouting they just looked at me and ran by. I felt foolish and so did Guy. After awhile we got up nerve and went down to the hogan. The sheep were eating nearby and the women were feeding the little lambs. They didn't seem angry so I started to chop wood. It didn't take long to find out that wasn't so easy either; I had to rest about every five chops. Then I goofed again. I broke an ax handle. Pretty soon John Dick's wife told us to come and eat. We didn't understand at first so she motioned with her hand and mouth and we got the idea. I showed the axe and she giggled. We were glad to be eating. We had fry bread and coffee. It tasted very good.

After we ate John Dick came home and ate too. Then he talked to us about the Navajo ways of life. Ernest Dick interpreted for us. We said we liked the way the Navajos lived very much but that we weren't very good shepherds. He then tried to teach us many Navajo words. I seemed to forget them very quickly, but I'm still trying to learn.

When we went to bed, it was very warm and I looked up at the log roof. The fire made light spots and shadows on the logs and for awhile the roof seemed to turn around. I woke up once in the night. I could see the stars through the smoke hole. I watched them for a long time and then dozed off again. I woke up again as John Dick started the fire. He scrambled up cedar bark and put the wood in on top. Soon the coals made the bark smoke and John blew on it and the fire started. In a little while I got up and went outside. The sun wasn't up yet. The sheep were still in the corral and some lambs were crying. It was cold and frost was on everything, even on the turkey's back.

We ate a good breakfast. Both of us chopped wood for about an hour and a half. We talked alot and Mrs. Dick probably said to herself those crazy men; chop, chop, talk, talk. Then we went to herd sheep. The woman had already taken them out and we couldn't find them at first, but then we saw them across the road. We wanted to do every thing right this time. I went to the east and Guy went to the west. Then everything happened at once. I looked way down the road and saw about fifty sheep heading for the hogan. I was just about to start them when another flock

came over the hill and walked right into our flock. I didn't know what to do when Stephen Begay came over the hill and started to chase his sheep out of our flock. Four of his wanted to go with our sheep but I sat on two and Guy and Stephen both caught one; then after the flock moved away we chased them to Stephen's flock. After that we just herded the sheep all day. When we got back to the hogan we ate supper and rested. Around 6:00 some of the other teachers came and laughed at us. Dollie and Joe Yazzie, Abe Lincoln, all joked about us losing the sheep. Joe said he would pick us up the next morning. I slept well that night and got up before dawn. We were about to have breakfast when Joe Yazzie came and picked us up. It was time for school and we were in a hurry so I forgot my hat and gloves.

I enjoyed my stay very much. John Dick was very nice to us and some day I would like to go back again. I think I know how to herd sheep a little better now.

Guy Blackwell